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# Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014)

## I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 17 of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report to it on the implementation of the resolution by all parties in the Syrian Arab Republic.

2. The report provides information on the humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and on the implementation of the key elements of resolution 2139 (2014), including violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, humanitarian access to besieged and hard-to-reach areas, including across conflict lines and across borders, the expansion of humanitarian relief operations, the free passage of medical personnel, equipment, transport and supplies and the safety and security of personnel engaged in humanitarian relief activities.

3. The report covers the period from 22 February to 21 March 2014. To give the Security Council as full a picture as possible of the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, some information is included that predates the reporting period (where full data are not yet available for the reporting period or the data presented benefit from contextualization). The information contained herein is based on the limited data to which United Nations actors have access, in addition to reports from open sources, sources in the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic.

## II. Major developments

4. During the reporting period, indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks, including aerial bombings, shelling, mortars and car bombs in populated areas, caused mass civilian death and injuries and forced displacement. Publicly available reports indicate that clashes between government and opposition forces continued in most parts of the Syrian Arab Republic. There were continued reports of artillery shelling and air strikes, including the use of barrel bombs, by government forces. Car bombings and suicide attacks, including against civilian targets, resulted in civilian deaths and injuries. Many such attacks were claimed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and the Nusrah Front. Clashes also took place between armed opposition groups and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, mainly in the north.



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Government-controlled cities and towns, including Damascus, were subject to mortar attacks by armed opposition groups. Reported daily death tolls were on average in excess of 200 people, including civilians.

5. Fighting was particularly intense in Aleppo, Dar'a and Rural Damascus governorates. At least 500,000 people have been displaced from the eastern part of the city of Aleppo since late January. Around 200,000 people have fled to the west of the city and around 300,000 to the north of the country. Approximately 100,000 internally displaced persons are sheltering in camps close to the Turkish border, while some 22,300 people fled to Turkey during the reporting period. In Dar'a governorate, fierce fighting between government forces and armed opposition groups escalated, leaving around 159,000 people displaced as at the end of February. In Rural Damascus governorate, around 50,000 people have fled the city of Yabroud, which was recaptured by government forces on 16 March, including nearly 14,000 who have fled to Arsal in Lebanon.

6. With regard to neighbouring countries, security incidents were reported across the Lebanese border and the disengagement line in the Golan. The Nusrah Front claimed responsibility for rocket attacks in the Bekaa valley in Lebanon on 3 and 5 March.

7. The worsening security environment notwithstanding, the United Nations and its partners continue to reach millions of people with lifesaving assistance. In February, the World Food Programme (WFP) and partners provided food to 3.7 million people in 13 governorates. Some 180,000 people were reached with food in February and March in areas of Rural Damascus, Deir-ez-Zor, Dar'a and Ar-Raqqa governorates that had been cut off for a prolonged period. Between 22 February and 8 March, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and partners delivered essential relief items for more than 1 million people in all governorates, except Deir-ez-Zor. On 25 February, the International Organization for Migration reached Deir-ez-Zor governorate for the first time since March 2013 with basic lifesaving commodities for 13,000 internally displaced persons. Since 23 February, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has delivered food for 140,000 Palestine refugees and primary education to 41,500 children throughout the country. During the reporting period, the United Nations Children's Fund and partners provided water treatment supplies benefiting approximately 1.8 million people in Tartous and Deir-ez-Zor governorates. Also during the reporting period, the World Health Organization reached nearly 441,000 beneficiaries with medicines (excluding vaccines) in Homs, Aleppo, Rural Damascus, Damascus, Idleb and Ar-Raqqa governorates. More than 46,000 internally displaced persons have received primary health care through UNHCR in Damascus, Rural Damascus, Aleppo and Al-Hasakeh governorates since 22 February.

8. During the reporting period, the fourth round of the polio vaccination campaign was carried out, reaching 2.8 million children under 5 years of age. The number of children vaccinated in hard-to-reach areas increased and some previously inaccessible areas became partially accessible owing to local arrangements and contacts on the ground, including Ghouta in Rural Damascus governorate, Nubul and Zahra in northern Aleppo governorate and parts of Quamishli city.

## III. Violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by the parties

9. During the reporting period, the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic presented the findings from its report (A/HRC/25/65) to the Human Rights Council. The report, which covers investigations from 15 July 2013 to 20 January 2014, states that government forces and pro-government militia have committed crimes against humanity and war crimes, including massacres. Armed opposition groups have also committed war crimes and other violations of international humanitarian law, including massacres.

10. The commission of inquiry found that torture and other inhumane acts constituting crimes against humanity and war crimes were committed by government forces and militia. Torture and ill-treatment were routinely committed at official detention facilities, by intelligence agencies, at checkpoints around besieged areas, in house raids and as part of the sieges of communities that are being used to control and contain people. The commission also found that non-State armed groups throughout the Syrian Arab Republic inflicted severe physical or mental pain on civilians in areas under their control, during apprehension and/or detention. It noted that the increase in such patterns constituted an emerging widespread and systematic attack on the civilian population and that the rise in torture and the inhumane treatment of civilians in areas controlled by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and affiliated groups provided reasonable grounds to believe that such groups promote the widespread and systematic attack on the civilian population. In his statement to the Human Rights Council of 18 March 2014, the Chair of the commission noted that, in Ar-Raqqa governorate, the widespread detention of civilians and their systematic torture by identified armed groups amounted to a crime against humanity.

11. Throughout the reporting period, United Nations field sources reported continued air raids, including the use of barrel bombs, by government forces in Aleppo, Dar'a, Deir-ez-Zor, Hama and Rural Damascus governorates. In its oral update on 18 March 2014, which covered violations from 20 January to 10 March, the commission of inquiry reported that, since 20 January, the Government had ramped up its campaign of dropping barrel bombs into residential neighbourhoods of Aleppo city, with devastating consequences for civilians. In launching those attacks, government forces made no effort to distinguish civilians from military targets. Other examples reported by United Nations field sources include the dropping of barrel bombs on Hmeirat in the rural north of Hama governorate on 3 March, killing at least nine civilians, and on both western (Yadudeh and Mzeirab) and eastern rural areas (Neimeh) of Deir-ez-Zor governorate on 3 and 4 March.

12. According to the oral update, armed groups have shelled towns and villages in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama and Al-Hasakeh governorates. There has been an increased use of car bombs, some of which targeted wholly civilian areas. For example, according to United Nations field sources, at least 15 people were killed and 12 others wounded by a car bomb on 6 March in the Armenian district of the city of Homs, home to mostly Christian and Alawite communities. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack.

13. Also according to the oral update, non-State armed groups have increasingly resorted to suicide bombings and the use of improvised explosive devices. On 11 March, three fighters from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant wearing explosive vests detonated themselves at a municipal office in Quamishli,

Al-Hasakeh governorate. Five people were killed and eight wounded. There were no military targets in the area. The primary purpose of the attack was to spread terror among civilians, a violation of international humanitarian law.

14. During the reporting period, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights received reports that, in Ar-Raqqa governorate, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant imposed discriminatory measures on the Christian community, including prohibiting the building or repair of churches and monasteries, the display of crosses and bibles in a visible manner, the ringing of church bells and the practising of rituals unless in a church. It further called for Christian adult men to pay a special tax for non-Muslims (*jizyah*).

15. Hospitals, ambulances and medical staff continued to come under attack. For example, the commission of inquiry stated in its oral update that, on 23 February, a car bomb targeted the Orient Medical Clinic in the opposition-controlled town of Atmeh, near the Syrian-Turkish border, killing at least nine people. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant claimed responsibility for the attack. According to United Nations field sources, 5 civilians were killed and 13 injured in an explosion near Al-Zaem hospital in the government-held Akrama neighbourhood of the city of Homs on 27 February. Medical facilities also continue to be used for military purposes. At least 20 hospitals remain occupied by armed forces and armed opposition groups with no respect for their civilian character.

16. Children and women continue to bear the brunt of the conflict. The United Nations Children's Fund reported in March that, by conservative estimates, at least 10,000 children had been killed during the conflict and that the real number was likely to be higher. In its oral update, the commission of inquiry stated that sexual violence against women and men in government detention was continuing and that non-State armed groups had targeted female family members of government forces. According to United Nations field sources, more than 300 cases of gender-based violence were recorded during the reporting period in three health clinics in Damascus and Rural Damascus governorates alone.

17. In violation of customary international humanitarian law, world heritage sites, including Palmyra, Krak des Chevaliers, the Church of Saint Simeon Stylites in the northern Syrian Arab Republic and the Aleppo citadel, have suffered considerable and sometimes irreversible damage and continued to be used for military purposes or be transformed into battle sites during the reporting period. Archaeological sites are systematically looted, especially in opposition-held areas, and illicit trafficking in cultural objects has increased dramatically.

18. On 25 February, in a briefing to the General Assembly, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reiterated her call for the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic to be referred to the International Criminal Court.

## IV. Humanitarian access to besieged and hard-to-reach areas, including across conflict lines and across borders

19. As the conflict intensifies and fighting between armed groups increases, more people are slipping out of the reach of humanitarian organizations. Around 3.5 million people are now estimated to be in need of assistance in hard-to-reach areas, an increase of 1 million since the beginning of 2014.

20. Following the adoption of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic established a working group composed of representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the United Nations country team in the Syrian Arab Republic and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent to discuss ways to enhance humanitarian access and implement the resolution. At the request of the United Nations, the working group also includes representatives of the government security forces so as to expedite the implementation of agreements reached. In a letter to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator dated 19 March, the President of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces pledged the commitment of the Coalition and the Free Syrian Army to complying with the resolution.

21. During the first meeting of the working group, on 5 March, the United Nations shared a detailed list of 258 priority areas in the Syrian Arab Republic where humanitarian access, if granted, would allow a significant expansion of relief operations. In subsequent meetings, detailed negotiations focused on convoys to 29 areas in eastern and rural Aleppo governorate, Rural Damascus and Dar'a governorates, in addition to the governorates of Al-Hasakeh, Deir-ez-Zor and Ar-Raqqa. Discussions are also continuing at the governorate level in Homs, Hama, Latakkia and Tartous on three-month assistance plans for Wa'er, Ar-Rastan, Talbiseh, Tir Maallah, Taldu, Houla, Hisn and Zahra in Homs; Kafr Zeita, Latmana, Aqrab, Halfaya, Tremseh and Qamhaneh in Hama; and Ma'arrat An Nu'man, Saraqab, Ariha, Foah and Kafraya Maar Tamsarin in Idleb.

22. Significant challenges to the delivery of assistance remain, including the need for multiple requests for approval of inter-agency convoys, which often go unanswered; the Government's lack of internal communication of approvals to those on the ground, resulting in denial of access or delays at checkpoints; and continued insecurity. Increased fighting between armed opposition groups, including between groups aligned with the Free Syrian Army and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, has complicated the delivery of assistance, including through the cutting off of key access routes in the northern parts of the country.

## A. Access to besieged areas

23. Around 220,000 people remain besieged in the old city of Homs, Nabul and Zahra, Madamiyet Elsham, eastern Ghouta, Darayya and other locations (see map 1). Around 175,000 people are besieged by government forces and 45,000 by opposition groups.

24. No new ceasefires were reached in besieged areas during the reporting period. In Madamiyat Elsham, as well as in Bwayda village and Qudsaya, ceasefire negotiations were unsuccessful. In Zahra and Hosn (rural Homs), parties to the conflict did not agree upon proposals for a ceasefire by local councils.

25. In addition, breaches of existing ceasefire agreements were reported. In the Yarmouk Palestinian refugee camp, clashes resumed on 1 March, preventing the delivery of aid until 18 March when UNRWA was able to deliver 1,020 food parcels and other relief items. Malnutrition continues to be a serious concern for residents of the camp.

26. In Homs, following the ceasefire that allowed the evacuation of 1,366 people from the old city in early February, shelling and bombing returned to pre-ceasefire levels during the reporting period. Since 15 March, an additional 200 people, including 35 adult men, have been evacuated from the old city following an agreement between the parties and the Governor of Homs. An estimated 150 male evacuees, including the 35 recently evacuated adult men, remain at a screening facility pending government processing. On 8 March, visits by United Nations protection monitoring teams to the facility were suspended after it was struck by a mortar. Ten people were injured and hospitalized, including five children. It is estimated that 2,000 people remain trapped in the old city.

27. In Aleppo governorate, opposition groups are demanding that the siege of eastern Ghouta be lifted before they lift the siege of Zahra and Nubul, where around 45,000 people remain besieged. However, 5,088 children were vaccinated against polio in March.

28. In Rural Damascus governorate, unverified reports indicate that around 15,000 to 20,000 people returned to Madamiyet Elsham in February and March following a decrease in the intensity of the conflict and the relative stability of the local ceasefire agreement. The United Nations has submitted 15 requests for government authorization to gain access to Madamiyet Elsham since 25 March 2013. On 1 March, the Government approved such a request, but the convoy was unable to proceed because some opposition groups asked for an additional 48 hours to prepare themselves to receive the assistance. Following a further request, the Government informed the United Nations that a convoy could depart on 15 March. On 14 March, however, although the trucks had already been loaded, the Government postponed the convoy to 17 March. Lengthy searches of relief supplies destined for Madamiyet Elsham were undertaken on 17 March, during which government security officials said that medical supplies would not be allowed, the approval received by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs notwithstanding. The convoy sought to reach Madamiyet Elsham on 18 March, but had to turn back because pro-government forces would allow deliveries only in government-controlled areas.

29. An estimated 8,000 people in Darayya, Rural Damascus governorate, have been besieged by pro-government forces since November 2012. Increased hostilities and heavy shelling, including the reported use of barrel bombs, were reported in the past month.

30. An estimated 160,000 people have been besieged by pro-government forces in eastern Ghouta since late 2012. With the exception of the vaccination of around 40,000 children in Douma in March, no aid has entered the area and an escalation of the conflict has been reported. On 27 February, three separate notes verbales for inter-agency convoys were submitted to the Government. All went unanswered. New notes verbales were submitted on 2 March. Feedback from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was received on 13 March requesting that convoys to Nubul and Zahra be prioritized. On 17 March, however, the Ministry approved a convoy with limited supplies to Douma. On 20 March, a United Nations convoy successfully reached Douma with 600 food rations and non-food items to cover the needs of 3,000 people. All parties upheld the temporary ceasefire for the period of the delivery. The United Nations observed several hundred women and children near the front line seeking to leave Douma.

## B. Access to hard-to-reach areas

31. Limited aid was delivered to a number of hard-to-reach areas in the reporting period for the first time in several months. In Dar'a governorate, WFP partners reached Bisr Elharir on 28 February with food for 10,000 people. In Ar-Raqqa governorate, UNHCR dispatched assistance to local charities to help 5,000 people on 1 March — the first relief to reach the area since November 2013. On 8 March, WFP trucks reached Ar-Raqqa governorate with supplies for 20,000 people. On 11 March, food rations sufficient to assist a further 16,000 people for one month reached the warehouse of a WFP implementing partner. In Idleb governorate, an inter-agency convoy dispatched assistance to the warehouse of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent in Salqin on 1 and 2 March to be distributed to 17,500 people in camps for internally displaced persons in Harim, some of which have not been reached by the United Nations or the Syrian Arab Red Crescent for more than nine months. In Damascus governorate, regular deliveries of assistance have begun following the truce concluded in Barzeh in January. After lengthy negotiations with the Government, a United Nations convoy to the west of Aleppo city on 16 March delivered medicines and medical supplies to assist around 82,000 people, food and medicines for 32,000 Palestine refugees in Neirab camp and non-food items for 5,000 people. On 27 February, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, supported by WFP, sent a convoy of assistance for 13,400 families to Deir-ez-Zor city and the rural areas of Abu Kamal city, Al Mayadin city, Muhasan subdistrict and Kabayeb, which had not been reached with food for several months.

32. There were, however, several instances in which aid convoys either could not proceed or were prevented from carrying essential items, such as medicines. Deliveries of supplies to Deir-ez-Zor governorate, for example, have been on hold since 1 March because several trucks, including those carrying WFP food rations for approximately 45,000 people, are being held at the government-controlled Sukhnah checkpoint in Palmyra. In Rural Damascus governorate, the agreement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs notwithstanding, a convoy to Adra Umaliyeh (held by the Government) and Adra al-Balad (held by the opposition) on 12 March was held at a government checkpoint for hours, making it impossible to reach the convoy's destination and distribute relief items by nightfall. Government officials also removed medical supplies from the convoy before its departure on the basis that there were no functioning health facilities in the two locations. The following day, the convoy again could not reach the two locations owing to sustained shooting, shelling and the lack of sufficient assurances of safe passage from the Nusrah Front. In Homs governorate, the United Nations delivered humanitarian assistance to 20,000 people in the opposition-held area of Houla and to 2,000 people in government-controlled Shin on 7 March. Some medicines initially approved by the Government were, however, removed from the convoy by the government security focal point.

33. Many of the 258 hard-to-reach areas have yet to be reached with assistance (see map 2). They include locations that host large numbers of Palestine refugees, such as Khan Eshieh camp, in Rural Damascus governorate, and Mzeireb and Jlein, in Dar'a governorate. The latter have been under the control of opposition forces since 2012 and UNRWA has not, to date, been permitted to conduct cross-line missions.

### C. Cross-border assistance

34. Following repeated requests from the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic for permission to use the shortest routes possible to reach people in need, including across borders, the Government informed the Secretary-General in writing on 22 November 2013 of its decision to allow the entry of humanitarian aid through official border crossings with Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon. The Government has repeatedly said that using crossing points from Turkey, which are not under its control, "is a red line". Relief supplies continued to transit through the official government-controlled crossings with Jordan and Lebanon. The Ya'rubiyah crossing with Iraq remained closed, however, because the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic objected to the raising of the Kurdish flag there by the Democratic Union Party. Given the urgent need to deliver supplies to Al Hasakeh governorate, where 500,000 people have been without assistance for more than six months, United Nations agencies organized numerous airlifts from Erbil and Damascus to Quamishli while negotiations continued to secure the opening of the crossing. Such airlifts are, however, a limited and highly cost-ineffective alternative to land access.

35. On 6 March, following repeated requests from the United Nations, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic orally communicated to the Organization that the Government had approved the opening of the Nusaybin border crossing with Turkey for the dispatch of humanitarian relief supplies to Al-Hasakeh governorate. A written agreement was received on 13 March and a note verbale sent to the Government with details of the cross-border convoy request on 16 March. On 20 March, the first eight trucks of the United Nations humanitarian convoy reached Quamishli. The convoy includes 79 trucks carrying food, blankets, mattresses, hygiene kits, medicines and medical supplies for 268,000 people in need.

36. During the reporting period, the United Nations reiterated its request to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic that other border crossings be opened or better utilized to deliver humanitarian assistance to people in need. This includes additional crossing points with Turkey (Bab al-Hawa and Bab-al Salameh) for access to around 3.35 million people in need in Aleppo and Idleb governorates and Jordan (Al-Naseeb and Tal Shihab) for access to around 452,000 people in need in Dar'a and Quneitra governorates. The Government restated its position that any border crossing could be opened provided that it was a "legal", official crossing point and would not compromise the sovereignty of the Government.

## V. Administrative hurdles

37. The formation by the Government of the working group on the implementation of resolution 2139 (2014) notwithstanding, there was no progress in streamlining and speeding up procedures to facilitate inter-agency convoys during the reporting period. The process for approval remains extremely complex and time-consuming. Each United Nations field mission or convoy continues to require a request to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 72 hours in advance, a facilitation letter from the Syrian Arab Red Crescent following the approval of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the

issuance of a facilitation letter by the Ministry of Social Affairs. In the case of medical assistance, an additional letter issued by the Ministry of Health is required.

38. The humanitarian response in the Syrian Arab Republic also continues to be hampered by limited operational capacity. There are currently 18 international non-governmental organizations approved to operate in the Syrian Arab Republic. The number of national non-governmental organizations currently authorized to partner directly with the United Nations increased by three during the reporting period to 77, yet the number approved in the most affected governorates remains limited. Restrictive requirements also continue to govern cooperation by international non-governmental organizations with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and are preventing the ability of such organizations to expand humanitarian operations, including hindering the establishment of sub-offices and not allowing them to work with national non-governmental organizations.

39. On 4 March, the Government communicated a new procedure for issuing visas to United Nations personnel, reiterating that processing required 15 working days for applications not from the Department of Safety and Security and 30 days for applications from the Department. Heads of United Nations agencies are to be issued renewable multiple-entry visas of one year's duration, deputy heads of agencies are to receive renewable multiple-entry visas for six months and international United Nations officials who have contracts to work in United Nations agency offices in the Syrian Arab Republic are to receive renewable multiple-entry visas for three months. In the reporting period, 27 United Nations visa requests (new and renewals) were submitted, of which 18 were approved, 8 remained pending and 1 was rejected. One visa request by the Department of Safety and Security was granted, but six remained pending. Obtaining additional Department visas is essential for the expansion of humanitarian operations. The new policy announced on 4 March does not apply to international non-governmental organizations, which continue primarily to receive three-month visas, often limited to a single entry. A total of 17 visa applications by international non-governmental organizations remain pending.

40. Given the regular telephone and Internet outages, and the impact of growing fuel and power shortages on communications infrastructure in the Syrian Arab Republic, access to emergency communications equipment for United Nations staff is essential. On 16 March, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the United Nations that there would be urgent follow-up on the required authorizations for approval to import and license communications equipment, which have been pending for many months.

## VI. Free passage of medical personnel, equipment, transport and supplies

41. Notwithstanding the demand by the Security Council that all parties respect the principle of medical neutrality and facilitate free passage to all areas for medical personnel, equipment, transport and supplies, including surgical items, the delivery of medical supplies continues to have to be negotiated with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic on a case-by-case basis. Since the adoption of resolution 2139 (2014), medical supplies that would have assisted around 201,000 people have been removed by government officials from inter-agency convoys to Houla (Homs

governorate) and Adra and Madamiyet Elsham (Rural Damascus governorate). In addition, on 24 February, a World Health Organization shipment of medicines and medical supplies destined for Ar-Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor governorates was held up at the government-controlled Sukhnah checkpoint in Palmyra. With the intervention of the Ministry of Health, the shipment destined for Ar-Raqqa governorate was released on 5 March and reached its destination on 8 March. The shipment for Deir-ez-Zor governorate, 75 per cent of which was destined for Boukamal (controlled by the opposition) and 25 per cent for Deir-ez-Zor city (controlled by the Government), was released on 10 March and has since reached its destination.

## VII. Safety and security of personnel engaged in humanitarian relief activities

42. The operational environment remains extremely difficult and dangerous for humanitarian workers. On 6 March, three mortars landed in the vicinity of Damascus Community School in the Abu Rummanah neighbourhood of Damascus, injuring two international non-governmental organization staff. On 3 March, volunteers from the Aleppo branch of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent were beaten and harassed by armed opposition groups while carrying out a mission near the prison. On 12 March, the Palestine Red Crescent Society confirmed the death of one of its pharmacists working in the Yarmouk camp, who had been shot dead outside the hospital by unknown perpetrators. On 18 March, mortars landed near the Safir Hotel in Homs, where the United Nations hub is based, damaging a United Nations vehicle.

## VIII. Observations

43. As the conflict enters its fourth year, indiscriminate and disproportionate violence and brutality continues unabated. According to most observers and reports, well in excess of 100,000 people have been killed since the beginning of the conflict. Reports and estimates from United Nations agencies indicate that more than 600,000 people have been injured since the onset of the crisis in March 2011. More than 9.3 million people in the Syrian Arab Republic are in need of humanitarian assistance, 6.5 million of whom are internally displaced. Nearly 2.6 million people have sought refuge in neighbouring countries and North Africa. Approximately half of the 540,000 Palestine refugees registered in the Syrian Arab Republic have been displaced within the country, with at least another 70,000 displaced abroad. Some 5.5 million Syrian children are in need of assistance.

44. Cities and villages have been reduced to rubble, communities are threatened and attacked and millions have been forced to flee. Poverty is on the rise. Weapons continue to flow into the country and are used indiscriminately against civilians. Health facilities and schools and other civilian infrastructure continue to be used for military purposes. Grave crimes go unpunished and thousands remain in captivity without recourse to due process.

45. I am extremely concerned at the continuing violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in the Syrian Arab Republic and the culture of impunity that has developed. All sides in the conflict must adhere to international humanitarian and human rights law. I strongly condemn the continued heavy

shelling, including the use of barrel bombs by government forces in residential neighbourhoods, in addition to the terror acts committed by extremist groups who are seeking to impose radical ideologies in some parts of the country. I remain deeply concerned at the participation of foreign elements and groups in the fighting. I reiterate my firm opposition to the transfer of arms and fighters from outside the Syrian Arab Republic to either side inside the country and call upon all States, organizations and groups to immediately cease supporting the violence and to use their influence to promote a political solution instead.

46. One month since the adoption of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), humanitarian access in the Syrian Arab Republic remains extremely challenging for humanitarian organizations. Delivering lifesaving items, in particular medicines, remains difficult. The assistance reaching people continues to fall far short of what is required to cover even their basic needs.

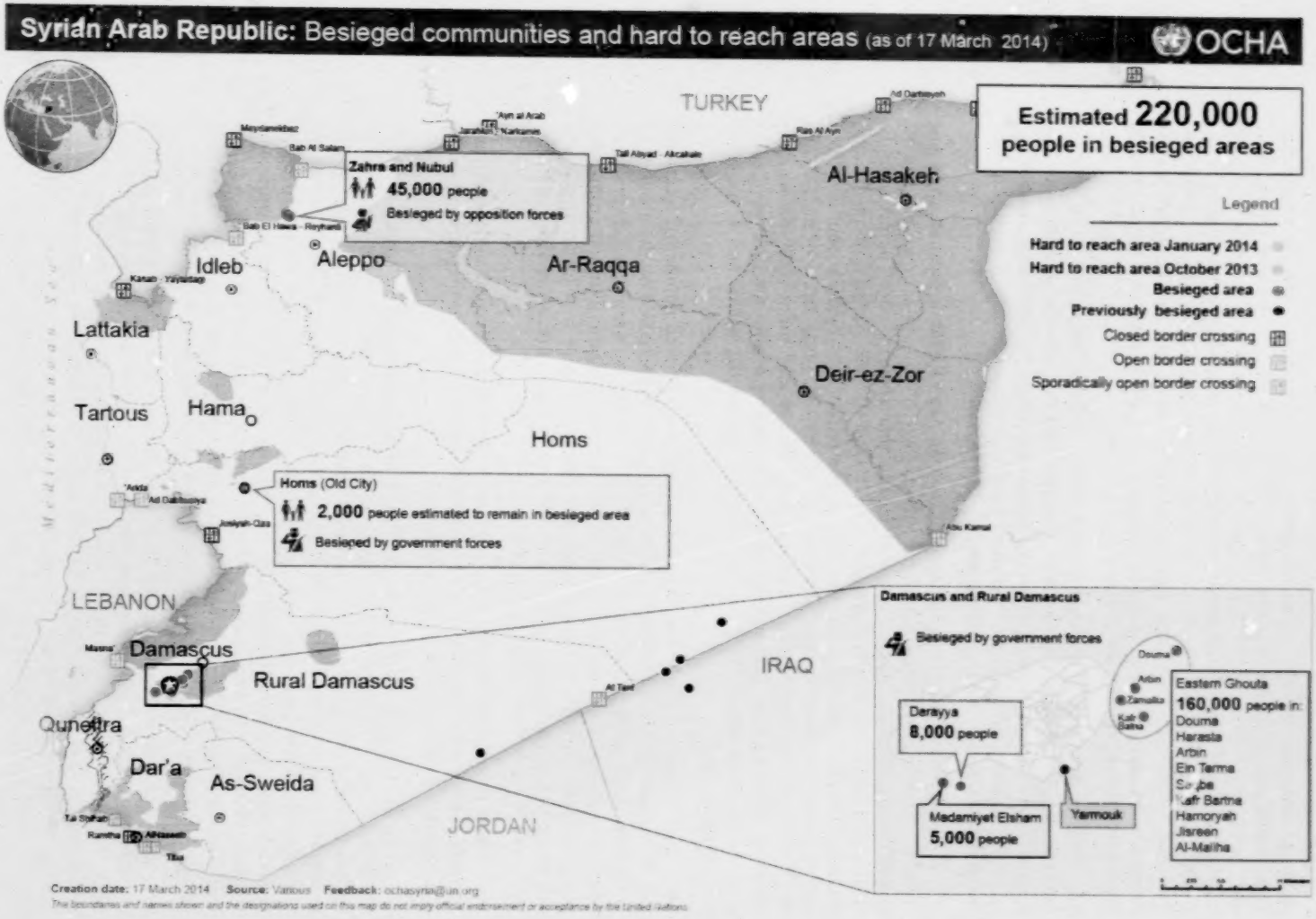
47. I strongly urge the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to streamline and speed up convoy procedures, ensure the safe passage of humanitarian convoys at all government-controlled checkpoints and ensure that security focal points comply with approvals given at the Damascus level; facilitate the passage of medicines, including surgical supplies, and desist from the removal of medical supplies from convoys; and continue to speed up the approval of visas. I urge opposition forces to facilitate safe and unhindered humanitarian access and grant safe passage to convoys; strengthen control and command structures to enable the safe passage of convoys at checkpoints that they control; and ensure the safety and security of humanitarian staff.

48. While localized ceasefires have led to access in a limited number of locations, the implementation of localized ceasefire agreements is hampered by the absence of a neutral third party to monitor them, lack of trust between the Government, opposition groups and local communities and the proliferation of armed groups and pro-government militia. I strongly denounce the use of siege as a tactic of war and ask all parties to immediately allow assistance to besieged areas and allow civilians who wish to leave those areas to leave.

49. The Syrian Arab Republic is now the biggest humanitarian and peace and security crisis facing the world. It requires an immediate end to the violence and a negotiated political solution to the conflict.

50. The Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, Lakhdar Brahimi, has continued his tireless efforts to negotiate an agreed transition. I deeply regret, however, that the process initiated through the cooperation between the Russian Federation, the United States of America and the United Nations has produced such poor results. I call upon the Syrian parties, the regional players and the international community to refocus efforts to work with stronger political will and greater unity to help the Syrian people to achieve their legitimate aspirations through a revitalized political process. The United Nations does not have the option of walking away from the Syrian Arab Republic.

51. Lastly, I wish to pay tribute to the United Nations staff on the ground for their outstanding courage, dedication and commitment during this particularly difficult time. I should also like to thank the United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, Yacoub El Hillo, and the Head of the Office of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria in Damascus, Mokhtar Lamani, for their leadership and hard work.


Syrian Arab Republic: Besieged communities and hard to reach areas (as of 17 March 2014)
OCHA
TURKEY
Estimated 220,000 people in besieged areas
Zahra and Nubul
45,000 people
Besieged by opposition forces
Aleppo
Idleb
Ar-Raqqa
Al-Hasakeh
Deir-ez-Zor
Lattakia
Tartous
Hama
Homs
Homs (Old City)
2,000 people estimated to remain in besieged area
Besieged by government forces
LEBANON
Damascus
Rural Damascus
IRAQ
Qunetra
Dar'a
As-Sweida
JORDAN
Legend
Hard to reach area January 2014
Hard to reach area October 2013
Besieged area
Previously besieged area
Closed border crossing
Open border crossing
Sporadically open border crossing
Damascus and Rural Damascus
Besieged by government forces
Eastern Ghouta
160,000 people in:
Douma
Harasta
Arbin
Ein Tarma
Saqba
Kafr Batna
Hamoryah
Jisreen
Al-Maliha
Darayya
8,000 people
Madamiyet Elsham
5,000 people
Yarmouk
Creation date: 17 March 2014 Source: Various Feedback: ochasyria@un.org
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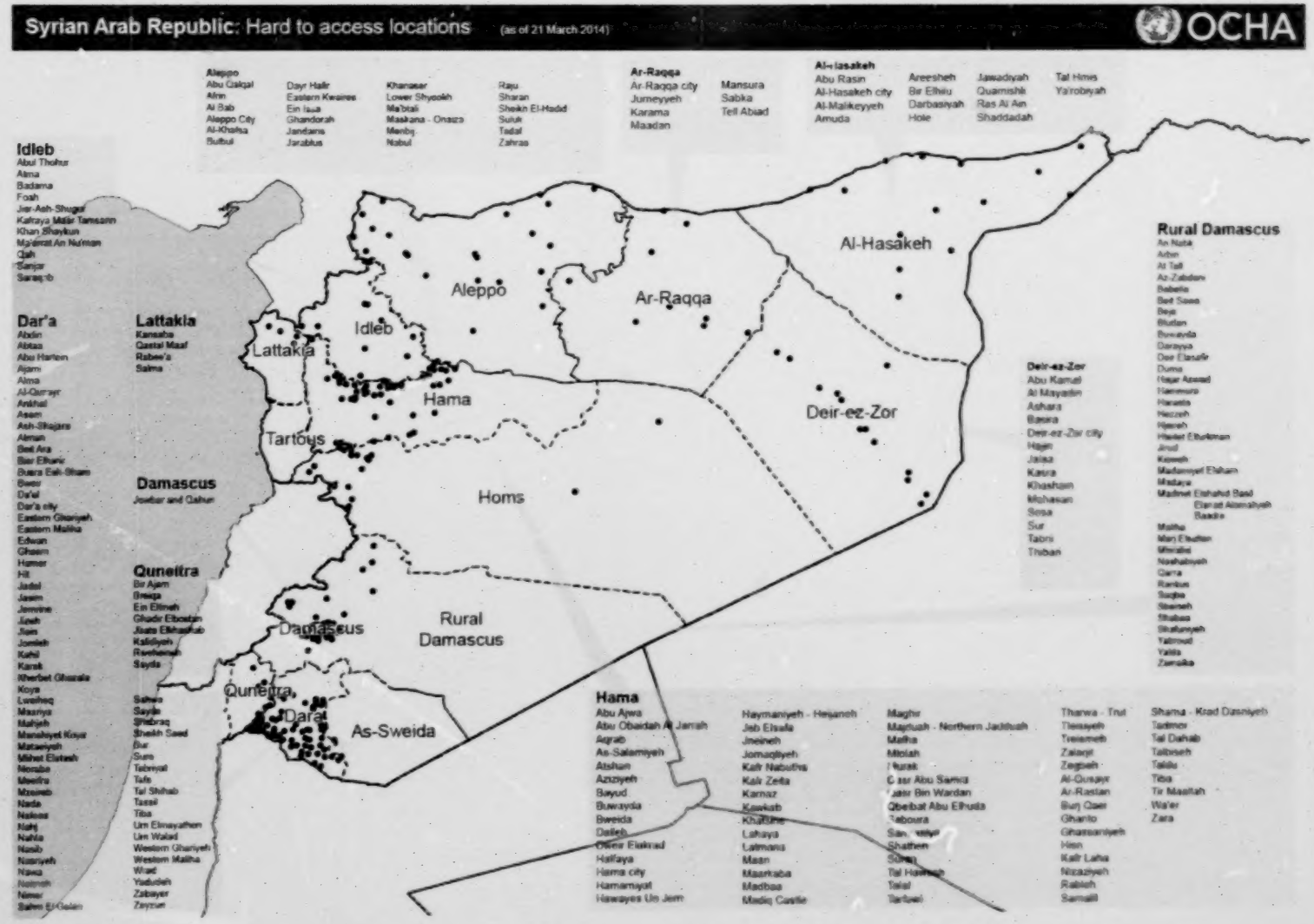
Syrian Arab Republic: Hard to access locations (as of 21 March 2014)
OCHA
Aleppo
Abu Qalqal
Afrin
Al Bab
Aleppo City
Al-Khafsa
Bulbul
Dayr Hafir
Eastern Kwaires
Ein Issa
Ghandorah
Jandaris
Jarablus
Khanaser
Lower Shyookh
Ma'batali
Maskana - Onaiza
Menbij
Nabul
Rau
Sharan
Sheikh El-Hadid
Suluk
Tadaf
Zahraa
Ar-Raqqa
Ar-Raqqa city
Jumeyyeh
Karama
Maadan
Mansura
Sabka
Tell Abiad
Al-Hasakeh
Abu Rasin
Al-Hasakeh city
Al-Malikeyyeh
Amuda
Areesheh
Ber Elhiiu
Darbasiyah
Hole
Jawadiyah
Quamishli
Ras Al Ain
Shaddadah
Tal Hmis
Ya'robiyah
Idleb
Abul Thohur
Alma
Badama
Foah
Jisr-Ash-Shoqur
Kafraya Mdar Tamsarin
Khan Shaykun
Ma'arrat An Nu'man
Qah
Sinjar
Saraqib
Dar'a
Abdin
Abtaa
Abu Harteen
Ajam
Alma
Al-Qurayr
Arkhal
Asam
Ash-Shajara
Atman
Bait Ara
Bir Elharic
Busra Esh-Sham
Bwer
Da'ul
Dar'a city
Eastern Ghariyah
Eastern Malha
Edwan
Ghasm
Hamer
Hit
Jadal
Jasm
Jemrine
Jiyah
Som
Jomleh
Kahil
Karak
Kherbet Ghazala
Koya
Lwaiheq
Maariya
Mahjah
Manshiyet Koya
Matawiyah
Mihet Elatash
Nemira
Meeira
Mzeireb
Nada
Nakaa
Nahj
Nahla
Nasib
Nasriyeh
Nawa
Nemreh
Nimr
Salem El-Golan
Lattakia
Kansaba
Qastal Maaf
Rabee'a
Salma
Damascus
Jowbar and Qabun
Quneitra
Bir Ajam
Breega
Ein Elbiyah
Ghadir Elbostan
Jbata Elkhashab
Kafidiyah
Ravhenyah
Sayda
Sahwa
Sayda
Shibraq
Sheikh Saad
Bur
Sum
Tabnyal
Tafa
Tal Shihab
Tasiel
Tiba
Um Elmayathen
Um Walad
Western Ghariyeh
Western Malha
Wtad
Yadudeh
Zabayer
Zeyzun
Deir-ez-Zor
Abu Kamal
Al Mayadin
Ashara
Basira
Deir-ez-Zor city
Hajin
Jalaa
Kasra
Khasham
Mohasan
Sosa
Sur
Tabni
Thiban
Rural Damascus
An Nabk
Arbin
At Tall
Az-Zabdani
Babella
Bet Sawa
Beya
Bludan
Buwayda
Darayya
Der Elasafir
Duma
Hajar Aswad
Harmoura
Harasta
Hazzeh
Hjeireh
Hurfet Elburkman
Jirud
Kisweh
Madamyet Elsham
Madaya
Madmet Elshahd Basil Elarsat Alsomariyeh Baadre
Maliha
Mari Elsultan
Mleiha
Nashabiyah
Qara
Rankus
Sargba
Sbeineh
Shabaa
Shefuniyah
Yabroud
Yalda
Zamalka
Hama
Abu Ajwa
Abu Obaidah Al Jarrah
Agrab
As-Salamiyah
Atshan
Azraiyeh
Bayud
Buwayda
Bweida
Dalleb
Deir Ekaraad
Halfaya
Hama city
Hamamiyat
Hawayes Un Jem
Haymaniyeh - Hejaneh
Jeb Elsafa
Jneineh
Jomaqliyeh
Kafr Nabutha
Kafr Zeita
Kamaz
Kawkab
Khattabe
Lahaya
Latmana
Masn
Maarkaba
Madbaa
Madiq Castle
Maghir
Maqtuah - Northern Jadduah
Matha
Mtolah
Nurak
Qasr Abu Samra
Qasr Bin Wardan
Qbeibat Abu Elhuda
Taboura
San...iyah
Shatheh
Sorej
Tal Hadeyah
Talat
Tartusi
Tharwa - Trut
Thesayeh
Tresmeh
Zalaqiyt
Zeggeh
Al-Qusayr
Ar-Rastan
Burj Qaer
Ghanto
Ghassaniyeh
Hesn
Kafr Laha
Nizaziyeh
Rabieh
Samalil
Sharna - Kraid Dasniyeh
Tadmor
Tal Dahab
Talbiseh
Talidu
Tiba
Tir Maallah
Wa'er
Zara
Idleb
Aleppo
Ar-Raqqa
Al-Hasakeh
Lattakia
Hama
Tartous
Homs
Deir-ez-Zor
Damascus
Rural Damascus
Quneitra
Dara'a
As-Sweida